



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee Meeting Summary

Conference Call and Webinar
Wednesday, March 16, 2016

Technical Committee Members: Nicole Lengyel (Chair), Alexei Sharov, Carol Hoffman, Edward Hale, Heather Corbett, Jill Ramsey, Kevin Sullivan, Luke Lyon, Michael Kaufman, Gary Shepherd, Kurt Gottschall

ASMFC Staff: Katie Drew, Max Appelman

Public: Joe Cimino, Jessica Best (NY), Mike Celestino

The Striped Bass Technical Committee (TC) met via conference call to review submitted state metadata and discuss whether or not additional data collection is necessary in preparation for the 2018 benchmark stock assessment.

On the December 2015 conference call, Striped Bass TC members discussed the need to identify spatial and temporal gaps in sex data, paired-age data, acoustic tagging data, and discard data along the coast so that additional data collection could be conducted if necessary in preparation for the 2018 benchmark assessment. Metadata on the above listed topics were submitted in an excel template to ASMFC Staff, compiled, and redistributed to the TC for review prior to the call. The TC Chair also summarized each data topic in a color coded table format to better visualize spatial and temporal data gaps, which was included in the Excel workbook.

The TC Chair reviewed submitted data, and the TC discussed each data topic, separately, to evaluate whether or not additional sampling is required in 2016 and 2017. Below is a summary of each data topic discussion:

Sex Data: data is available as far back as 1980, however data is fairly sparse spatially and temporally up until the late 1990's to the early 2000's, and even more robust from the mid-2000's to present. Members noted that the TC should be mindful of the inherent bias as a result of varying data collection method across surveys (i.e., gear selectivity, sampling proximity to spawning grounds, among other variables, may lead to biased estimates of age at maturity and sex-ratios in a given area). To that point, TC members also noted that for some surveys sampling is not random, nor conducted year round. The TC agreed that states collecting these datasets should continue sampling in 2016 and 2017 if at all possible. TC members also discussed the possibility of other available datasets from Universities, and similar academic groups that were not included in the state submitted metadata template. TC members should notify Nicole Lengyel (cc: Max Appelman) of any such data sets so that they can be pursued for the assessment. ASMFC Staff will schedule a Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) meeting to identify any potential bias in the sex data, and report back to the TC.

Paired Age Samples: data is available as far back as 1986, however sufficient sample size and spatial coverage doesn't exist until the late 1990's for the Chesapeake Bay, and mid-2000's for the rest of the coast. Members noted that, for the most part, scales have been aged, and otoliths that have been

collected have not been aged yet. To that point, Virginia and Massachusetts are the only states to have completely aged both scale and otolith samples. Members asked why otoliths weren't being aged. Was it funding issue, a training/experience issue, or both? Members discussed what the best method for ageing samples would be; whether to have both scales and otoliths ages by the same individual, or have them aged by separate individuals that are experienced with one or the other, noting that it is rare for an individual to accurately read both. Although the TC did not come to consensus on this yet, it was explained that there are ways to handle both methods using various scale-otolith age-conversion matrices. Members discussed if it would be helpful for ASMFC to hold an ageing workshop for striped bass before the assessment data workshop in the fall. It was mentioned that there have been ageing workshops for other species, and that there is one coming up, including multiple states, where reference collections of five or six species (including striped bass) are to be examined for teaching purposes, and as a means of annual reader calibration. Ed Hale (DE) volunteered to review state specific paired-age data more closely and evaluate what the most economically feasible and efficient approach would be for the TC moving forward. K. Drew volunteered to talk to ASMFC staff to determine if the ageing subcommittee will be pursuing a striped bass ageing workshop in the near future. Additionally, J. Cimino mentioned that ODU may have the means to process and age any un-aged otoliths and perhaps ASMFC would have money available to pay for this work to be completed.

Acoustic Tagging Data: data exists as far back as 2007, but is sparse across the coast with most coming from Maine and Massachusetts. Additionally, it was noted that not many of these fish were actually showing up on receivers. The cause is unclear, but it could just be low batteries on the tags. Members weren't sure how the SAS would be able to use such limited data to produce confident estimates of any kind. New York noted that a tagging study was initiated in 2014 with 40 striped bass tagged to date, and planned to continue tagging efforts in 2016 with hopes of tagging 100+ stripers split 50/50 between males and females, and of varying size and age. The expected life of these tags is 4-5 years, so data could be collected over that period. ASMFC Staff had previously reached out to Dave Secor (MD) to present and discuss his acoustic telemetry research to the TC, and the TC felt that it would be helpful to follow up on this and schedule a webinar between now and November (the next scheduled TC call for the 2018 benchmark assessment) for Dave to present his work.

Discard Data: data exists as far back as 1984, although sufficient spatial coverage occurs in the early 1990's, and more so by the early 2000's. Majority of the data is from volunteer-based recreational reporting programs and thus annual sample sizes are quite variable within each state. Although, it was noted that this is good data to supplement the commercial discard data collect by the Federal observer program. It was also discussed that the state discard data is likely biased by year class strength with stronger year classes contributing to higher discard rates once they become available to recreational fishing gears. Therefore, size and age frequency of the discards would be particularly important information. Members should make an effort to reach out to volunteers anglers to collect this data in 2016 and 2017 as these play directly into current stock status.

ASMFC Staff will follow up with individuals regarding the underlined tasks above.

Following data discussions, and with field season right around the corner, the TC Chair reminded members to keep these data discussions in mind and collect additional data wherever possible. Lastly, the TC reviewed the 2018 benchmark assessment timeline, and the next meeting is tentatively scheduled for November/December 2016 to further discuss data needs and develop terms of reference for Board approval in February 2017.